

Public Notice

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk District

CENAO-TS-REG
NAO-2008-0561

June 27, 2008

JOINT FEDERAL/STATE PUBLIC NOTICE

The District Engineer has received a prospectus to establish a compensatory mitigation bank for Federal and State permits as described below:

BANK SPONSOR:

Virginia Wetlands Credits LLC
9841 Washingtonian Boulevard, Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

WATERWAY AND LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED WORK: The proposed stream and wetland mitigation bank is located on an approximately 204-acre parcel on Ridgeside Road in Loudoun County, Virginia. The project is called Grasslands Mitigation Bank. The work will occur in tributaries to Beaverdam Creek.

PROPOSED WORK AND PURPOSE: The bank sponsor proposes to sponsor and establish a compensatory mitigation banking agreement. A copy of the prospectus is enclosed.

The bank will be established to provide mitigation to compensate for impacts to wetlands and streams within the specified service area. This service area shall include Piedmont areas (west of Interstate 95) of Hydrologic Unit 02070008, and the adjoining hydrologic units of 02070007, and 02070010, within Warren County, Clarke County, Loudoun County, Fauquier County, Prince William County, and Fairfax County.

AUTHORITY: Permits may be required pursuant to Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act (Public Law 95-217), and Title 62.1 of the Code of Virginia. This Public Notice is recommended pursuant to Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use and Operation of Mitigation Banks (60 Federal Register Number 228).

COMMENT PERIOD: Comments should be made in writing to Mr. Ron Stouffer at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Norfolk District, Northern Virginia Field Office, 18139 Triangle Plaza, Suite 213, Dumfries, VA 22026, and should arrive by the close of business on July 28, 2008.

FOR THE DISTRICT COMMANDER:

Keith B. Lockwood
Chief, Northern Virginia
Regulatory Section

Enclosure: Prospectus

PROSPECTUS

GRASSLANDS MITIGATION BANK

Loudoun County, Virginia

Sponsor:

Virginia Wetlands Credits, LLC
9841 Washingtonian Boulevard, Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Prepared by:

Acorn Environmental, Inc.
708 Laurel Lane
Severna Park, Maryland 21146
410-729-1470

**Prospectus to Establish
Grasslands Wetland and Stream Mitigation Bank**
Loudoun County, Virginia

I. Project Description

Virginia Wetlands Credits, LLC (Sponsor) proposes to establish a wetland and stream mitigation bank on a 204-acre property located on Ridgeside Road in western Loudoun County south of Bluemont (see Exhibit 1 for site location). The proposed bank site is located in Hydrologic Unit Code 02070008 and is drained by unnamed tributaries to Beaverdam Creek. The Bank will be used for compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts to waters of the United States including wetlands that result from activities authorized under Section 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 62.1-44.15:5 of the Code of Virginia provided such activities have met all applicable requirements and are authorized by the appropriate authority.

The goal of the project is to restore and establish 36 acres of seasonally saturated, forested wetlands, and restore 500 linear feet of stream channel. The wetland design will target functions and values associated with wildlife habitat, nutrient removal and transformation, sediment retention, and flood-flow attenuation. Approximately 5.6 acres of riparian buffer will be restored to enhance wildlife functions. The Grasslands site provides a significant opportunity to restore and preserve a substantial area along perennial and intermittent stream channels that have historically been used for hay and pasture. The combination of wetland establishment and stream restoration will greatly improve the overall quality and integrity of the riparian ecosystem.

II. Geographic Service Area

The proposed Grasslands Mitigation Bank will provide mitigation to compensate for impacts to Waters of the United States and/or State Waters, including wetlands, within the service area depicted on the excerpt of the USGS Hydrologic Unit Map shown in Exhibit 2. This service area shall include Piedmont areas (west of Interstate 95) of Hydrologic Unit 02070008, and the adjoining hydrologic units of 02070007, and 02070010, within Warren County, Clarke County, Loudoun County, Fauquier County, Prince William County, and Fairfax County.

III. Existing Site Conditions

Land Use

The mitigation site is part of a 204-acre property owned by Beaver Creek Farm, LLC. The site is mowed for hay, and in the past it was used to pasture cows. It is currently used to pasture horses. The property upslope of the project area includes hayfields, and the surrounding land use includes agriculture and rural residential. An aerial view of the property is provided in Exhibit 3.

The Sponsor has acquired a Conservation Easement on approximately 45 acres of the property to establish the mitigation bank, and the Virginia Land Trust holds a conservation easement on the property that limits future subdivision, building locations, and land use. The owner has also recorded a restrictive covenant for the proposed mitigation area that is attached to the land deed.

Soils

The site is located in the Piedmont Lowlands, with soils that formed in colluvium and local alluvium over metamorphic rock. Soil Survey maps for Loudoun County (1986) identify several mapping units on the site (Exhibit 4). Dominant soils in the proposed bank area are described in the following table.

Map Unit	Name	Depth to High Water Table (ft.)	Hydrologic Group	Landscape - Formation
10B	Mongle	0.8 - 2.0	D	Drainage swales - alluvium
12B	Rohresville	0.8 - 2.0	D	Footslopes and drainage swales
82B	Scattersville	0.8 - 2.0	C	Swales and footslopes - colluvium

Twelve test pits were excavated on the property to confirm information provided in the soil survey, and to complete pre-construction soil profile descriptions. All portions of the site are underlain by a slowly permeable subsoil that contains 30% to 40% clay. Most soil profiles contain redoximorphic features within 12 inches of the surface, indicating a seasonally fluctuating water table near the surface.

Existing Hydrology

The streams at Grasslands have been channelized and impacted by agricultural activities for many years. Nearly every reach of stream channel on this site has been obviously channelized and ditched to maximize drainage of the site and agricultural productivity. There is no evidence that this site has been utilized for row crop production in the recent past, with grazing and hay production the primary agricultural activities on the site.

Recent grazing pressures have not been as intensive as in the past, and many of the stream reaches are experiencing recovery and becoming more stable as vegetation stabilizes streambanks. However, several of these stream reaches are not experiencing immediate recovery and require additional intervention to restore adequate stream stability and function to the landscape.

In order to improve pasture conditions, shallow ditches have been excavated to promote surface runoff. The majority of wetlands on the site have been affected by these drainage practices, and now provide limited functions and values.

Jurisdictional Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.

A wetland delineation was completed by Acorn Environmental, and field-approved by the USACE on June 1, 2007 (project number 2007-1935). Approximately 17 acres of wetlands exist on the entire property, with 12.5 acres located within the easement area for the mitigation bank.

IV. Mitigation Methods

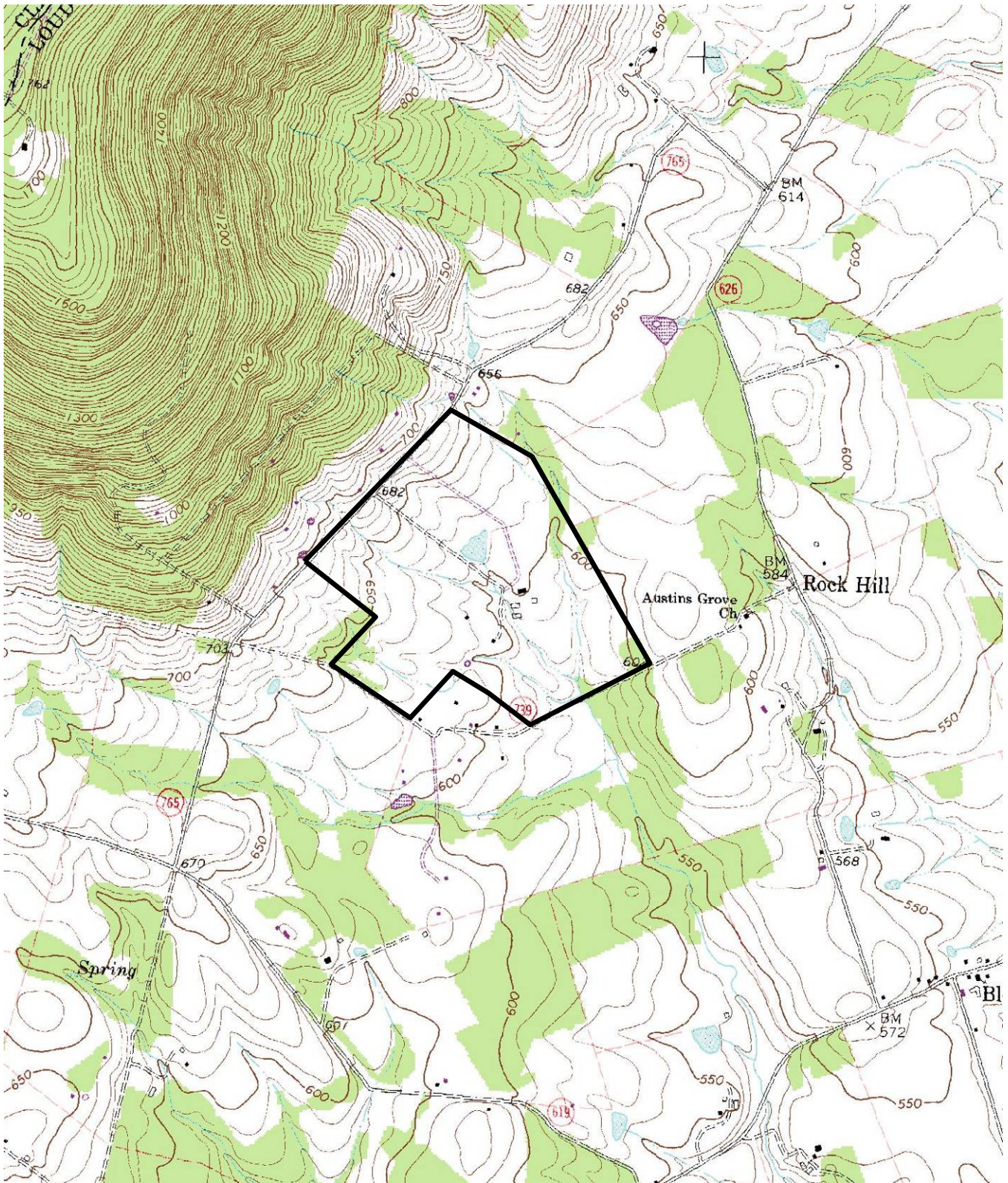
Based upon the hydric soils map, field borings of the soils, and discussions with the owner it appears that the areas proposed for Restoration/Creation were historically forested areas. They were converted to pasture and hay fields in order to support cows and horses by a combination of ditching and re-contouring.

Mitigation methods will be employed to reverse the previous agricultural practices on these lands so as to restore drained and degraded wetlands areas to a high level of wetlands function. This will be accomplished by a combination of practices, including but not limited to:

1. Filling or blocking of ditches,
2. Creation of low berms with outlet controls,
3. Regrading of high spots,
4. Herbicide treatments of non-native species,
5. Disking and plowing of soils,
6. Replanting of indigenous vegetation, and
7. Fencing along adjacent agricultural uses.

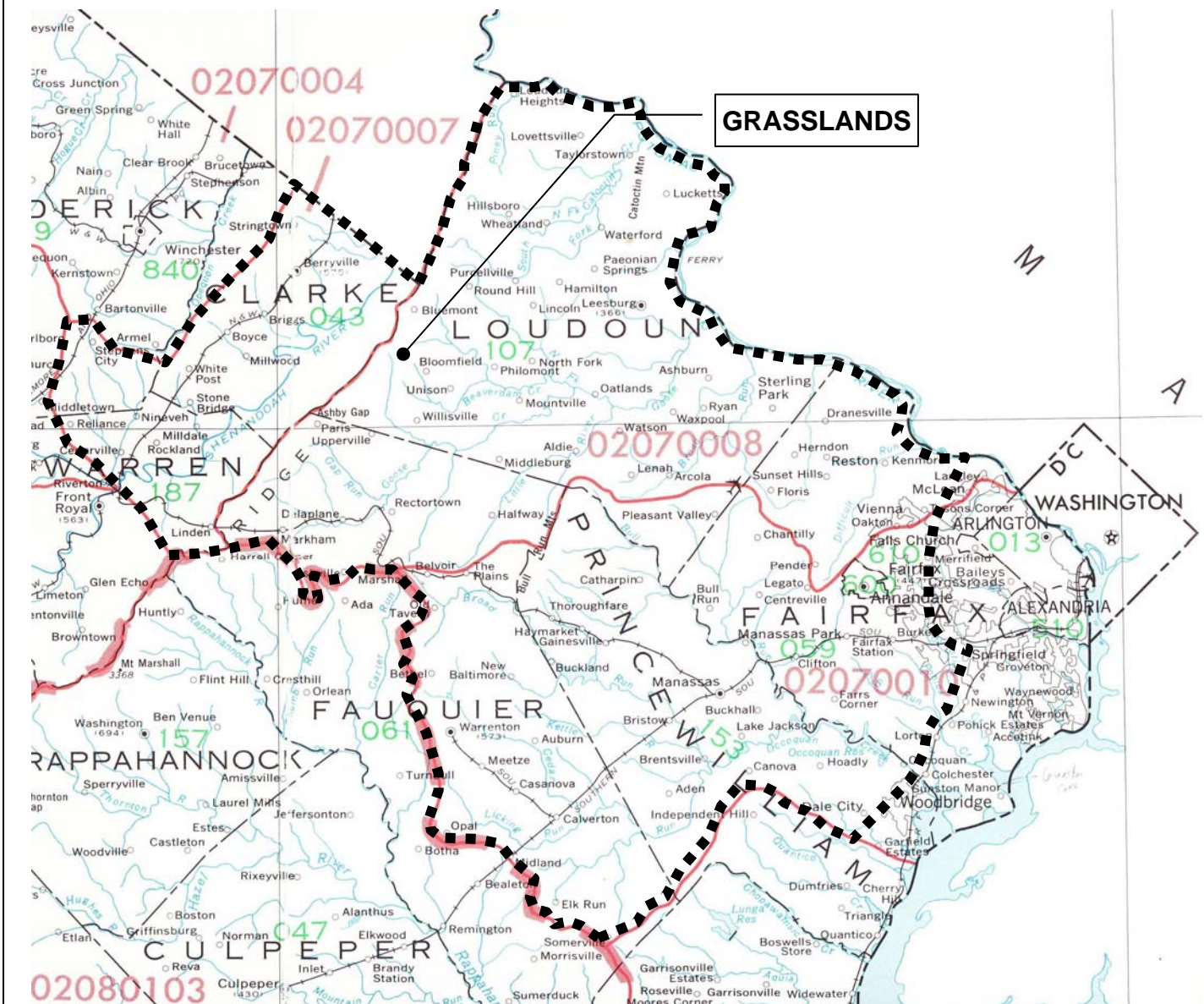
The proposed general location of the restored stream reaches are shown on the Conceptual Mitigation Plan provided as Exhibit 5. The proposed meander geometry is preliminary and will be further refined after additional study. These additional studies will include a longitudinal profile survey for each reach, hydraulic calculations, and a search for appropriate reference reaches in the surrounding area. However, with the intensive and long-term agricultural modification of the surrounding landscape, appropriate reference reaches may be difficult if not impossible to locate. In the absence of reference reach information, decisions on meander geometry will be based on established norms for various stream types.

The sponsor anticipates that the Grasslands Mitigation Bank would yield approximately 36 wetland credits and 1100 stream credits as shown on the Concept Plan provided in Exhibit 5. These estimates will be refined as design plans are prepared in consultation with the Interagency Review Team.



USGS Bluemont Quadrangle - Latitude 39.0669 Longitude -77.8463

Bank Sponsor: Virginia Wetlands Credits, LLC 9841 Washingtonian Boulevard, Suite 300 Gaithersburg, MD 20878 301-548-4670	<div>SITE VICINITY</div> <div>GRASSLANDS MITIGATION BANK</div> <div>HUC 02070008 Loudoun County, Virginia</div>	Exhibit 1
		Not to Scale
		April 2008



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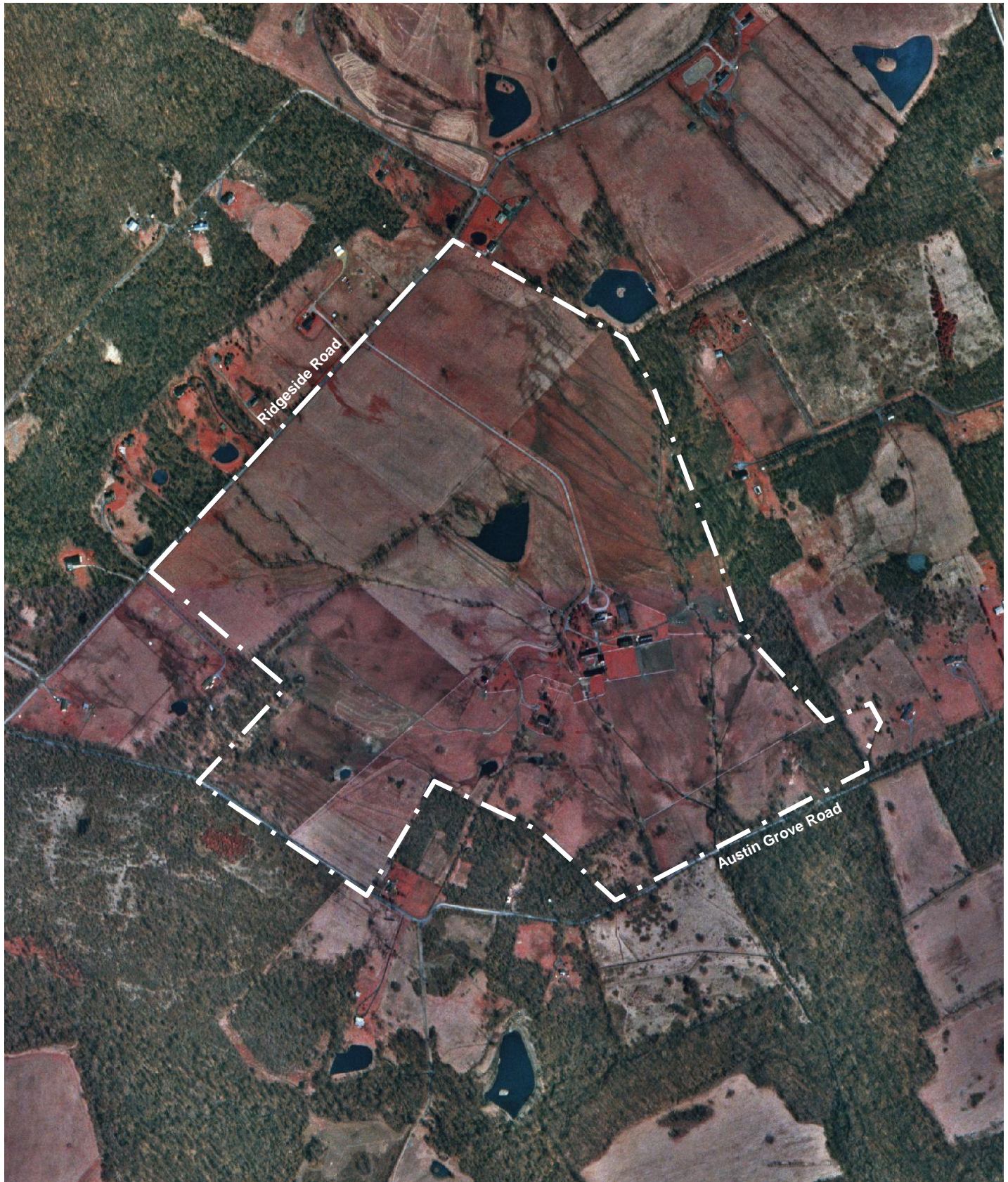
PROPOSED SERVICE AREA GRASSLANDS MITIGATION BANK

HUC 02070008

Loudoun County, Virginia

Exhibit 2

April 2008



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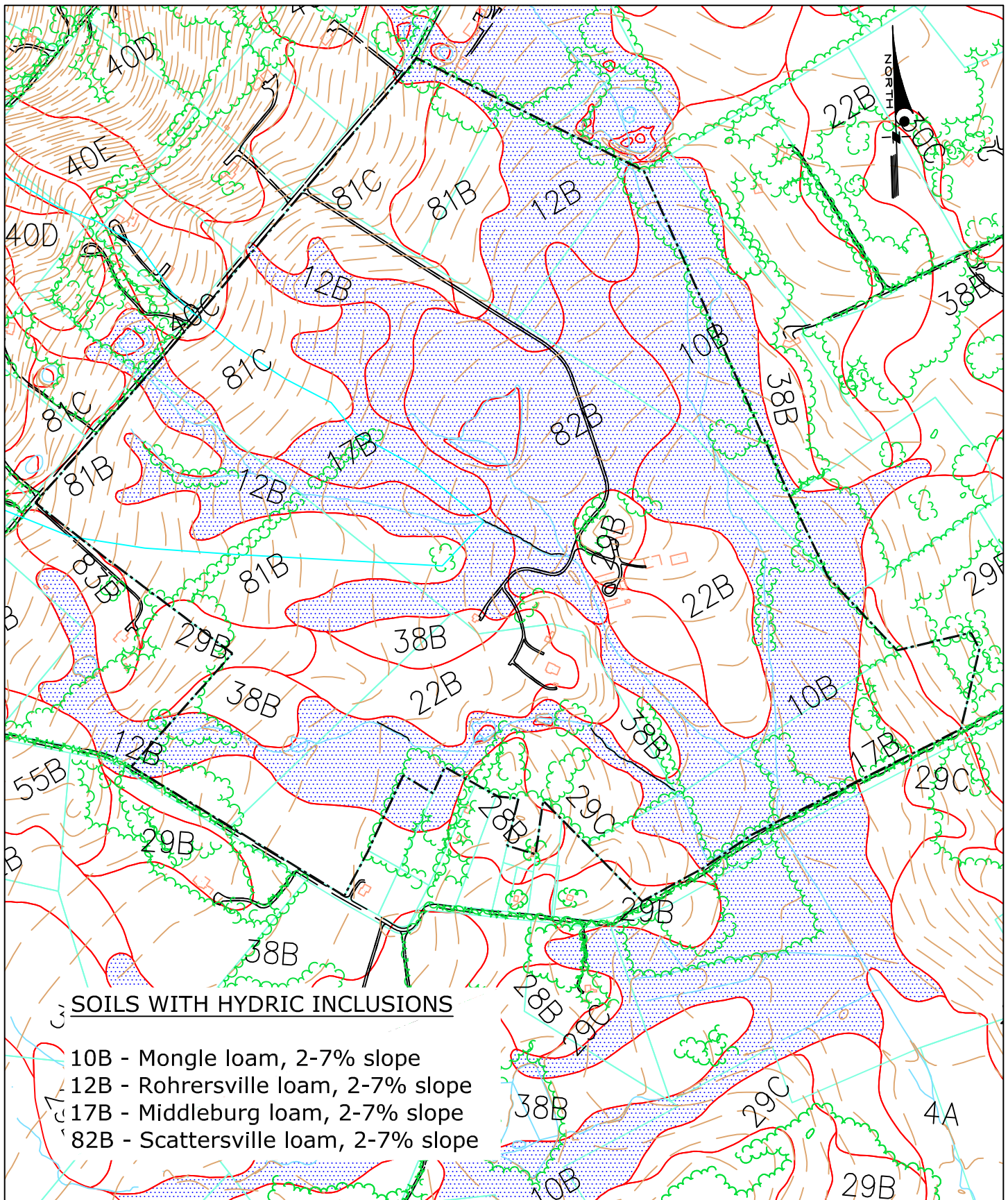
CIR AERIAL – 3/15/95
GRASSLANDS MITIGATION BANK

HUC 02070008 Loudoun County, Virginia

Exhibit 3

1 in = 1000 ft

April 2008



<p>Bank Sponsor:</p> <p>Virginia Wetlands Credits, LLC 9841 Washingtonian Blvd. Suite 300 Gaithersburg, MD 20878</p>	<p>SOILS MAP</p> <p>GRASSLANDS MITIGATION BANK</p> <p>HUC 02070008 Loudoun County, Virginia</p>	<p>EXHIBIT 4</p> <p>Scale: 1" = 600 ft</p> <p>April 2008</p>
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